

IC 74-2056  
23 September 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: Ad Hoc Committee on Alerting Memoranda

SUBJECT: Status Report on an Intelligence Alert System

REFERENCE: USIB-D-28.5/5, 28 August 1974  
USIB-D-28.5/6, 13 September 1974

1. By agreement of the USIB Principals reflected at the 12 September meeting, an ad hoc committee chaired by IC Staff met on 19 September to discuss procedures for the institution of a system of Alerting Memoranda (AM). IC Staff offers these further thoughts as a result of the discussions at the meeting.

--There is indeed a need for establishing some form of memorandum which can be sent by the DCI to the membership of WSAG. Such a memorandum should try not only to alert the policy makers but also inform them of steps being taken to improve intelligence collection, and, if the DCI considers it appropriate, recommend that WSAG meet on the problem.

--The alert should be issued only on matters important enough to engage WSAG. Ideally it should address a "potential" danger, i.e., do so before it clearly becomes "probable." No one doubts the practical difficulty in deciding when that "potential" stage has been reached. Often, as Mr. Baraz has observed, the key indicator before a crisis will prove to be the one which at the time did no more than create perplexity among analysts (perhaps because it conflicted with their previous estimates).

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--Ideally, also, the alerting process should have, as [redacted] noted, "total flexibility." That is, the DCI should be able to communicate with and receive communications from the NIOs, or the Watch Committee, or elements in the Pentagon, or perhaps even some special area task force in the Community. And whatever procedures are used must work rapidly.

2. On these propositions we gather that the ad hoc committee is in general agreement. But there are strong and widely shared uncertainties within the committee concerning the relationship of an Alerting Memorandum system to the Watch Committee, and indeed to the entire Watch mechanism. If, for example, the functions of the Watch Committee and the National Indications Center are to focus on the problem of strategic attack by the USSR or China on the US, the AM system would presumably engage a broad segment of the Community. On the other hand, if the charter of the Watch mechanism is

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to be broadened instead of narrowed, the Watch Committee--whatever its name--might assume the dominant role in the process. The proposal before the ad hoc committee to revitalize the Watch mechanism, a proposal based partly on resource constraints, aims at narrowing the charter.

3. The ad hoc committee also seems to hold a divided view on the degree of coordination required for the production of an Alerting Memorandum. The time available for the production and approval of a memorandum will no doubt in some instances create problems.

4. The committee agreed that the resolution of these uncertainties must wait upon the decisions of the meeting to revitalize the Watch mechanism. This meeting is still scheduled for 30 September, under the chairmanship of the Intelligence Community Staff.



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C/PRD/IC

Attachment

cc: D/DCI/IC  
D/DCI/NIO

IC/PRD/[redacted]:fn

Distribution:

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Representatives on Ad Hoc Committee on Alerting Memoranda

(Meeting of 19 September 1974)

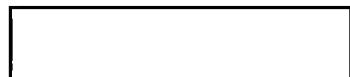
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